



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
10 December 2003

Original: English

Commission for Social Development

Forty-second session

4-13 February 2004

Item 3 (b) (iv) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: review of the relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups: modalities for review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

Modalities for the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted by the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002, noted that its systematic review of its implementation by Member States is essential for its success in improving the quality of life of older persons, and requested that the modalities of review and appraisal should be decided as soon as possible. The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/167, invited the Commission for Social Development to consider those modalities at its forty-first session in 2003. Following the recommendations of the Commission for Social Development, the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2003/14, invited Governments as well as the United Nations system and civil society to participate in a "bottom-up" approach to the review and appraisal of the Plan, through, inter alia, sharing of ideas, data collection and best practices, and requested the Secretary-General to include in his report to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session information on the implementation of its resolution entitled "Modalities for the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002".

* E/CN.5/2004/1.



At its fifty-eighth session, the General Assembly considered the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/58/160), including the information contained therein on progress in defining the modalities for the review and appraisal of the Plan. In its resolution 58/134, the General Assembly, *inter alia*, requested the Secretary-General to forward his report to the Commission for Social Development at its forty-second session and to make available any other relevant information related to this issue that may assist the Commission in its deliberations. Among the other relevant information the Commission may wish to consider is the note by the Secretariat (E/CN.5/2003/7) on modalities for the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, which it had before it at its forty-first session.

The present note reviews recent progress in defining the modalities for the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. It suggests, for the consideration of the Commission for Social Development, an approach for the review and appraisal at national, regional and international levels.

Modalities for the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

1. The Secretary-General, in his report on follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing to the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly (A/58/160), noted that while the principal approach to the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action is now defined, additional efforts are required to clarify the content of modalities and periodicity of the review and appraisal process. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, which serves as facilitator in the review process, convened a meeting of experts to assist in the accomplishment of this task.

2. The expert group meeting on modalities for review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing was held in Malta from 10 to 12 November 2003. The meeting was hosted by the Government of Malta and organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in cooperation with the International Institute on Ageing. The meeting was attended by 13 experts from all regions of the world and 10 observers from Governments and entities of the United Nations system. With the overall objective of contributing to the elaboration of modalities for the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action, the experts were invited to answer three principal questions, namely: what is the content of the review and appraisal; how to conduct the bottom-up process; and who is to be involved in the bottom-up review and appraisal exercise. The Commission for Social Development may wish to consider these same three principal questions as it determines the appropriate modalities for its review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action.

A. Content of the review and appraisal: two dimensions

3. Monitoring the implementation of the broad range of recommendations of the Madrid Plan of Action will vary from country to country owing to the vast diversity of circumstances of older persons and the different ways in which population ageing affects different societies. The scope of each national review and appraisal exercise will be defined by the specific priorities and objectives to be decided by Governments, which have the primary responsibility for implementing the Plan, in consultation with other stakeholders, including civil society organizations and the private sector. Overall, the review and appraisal process should focus on ageing specific policies as well as on efforts aimed at mainstreaming an ageing dimension into national development strategies.

4. The Madrid Plan of Action established three priority directions for specific action on ageing: older persons and development; advancing health and well-being into old age; and ensuring enabling and supportive environments. It further outlined 18 areas of concern (priority issues), with 35 objectives and 239 recommendations for action. These recommendations provide a framework for designing policies and programmes that address the specific needs and expectations of older persons and respond to the challenges and opportunities of population ageing.

5. While outlining the recommendations for ageing specific action, the Madrid Plan of Action called for linking ageing to development and recommended the mainstreaming of ageing into all policy areas, with particular emphasis on national

development frameworks and poverty eradication strategies. In its attempt to go beyond social welfare concerns, the Madrid Plan addressed ageing within a framework of poverty reduction, participation, gender equality and human rights. Policy action on ageing should be aligned with other cross-cutting issues, including HIV/AIDS, rural development and land rights, children and youth, education, health and poverty reduction. An important component of review and appraisal will be the tracking of the extent to which mainstreaming occurs at the national level and how ageing is integrated in development policies. Taking into account the importance of the poverty reduction strategy paper process for the poverty eradication efforts of many developing countries, the extent to which ageing is integrated into national poverty policies and the poverty reduction strategy paper process may also be considered a signpost of successful implementation. In assessing their national poverty reduction strategies, Governments should be able to simultaneously review implementation of the poverty, employment and human rights objectives and recommendations of the Madrid Plan.

6. Mainstreaming efforts are multidimensional in nature; thus their assessment should include multiple instruments, such as legislative review, budget monitoring across sectors at both the local and national level, age-specific analysis of institutional capacity-building, training and advocacy. To facilitate the process of mainstreaming, ageing policies could be declared a national priority. In order to coordinate the national mainstreaming process, it is recommended that a single lead agency, governmental or non-governmental, be given responsibility. Governments may also wish to establish a procedure for detecting and correcting any discrepancies between policies on ageing and policies and programmes in other sectors, in particular macroeconomic and financial policies. Integrating economic and social policies is a necessary precondition for enhancing consistency and improving the effectiveness of mainstreaming efforts.

7. Programmes and activities targeting older persons could be evaluated by analysing reports and studies produced by municipalities, the private sector, academia and civil society organizations. Civil society groups and coalitions that are already engaged in development programmes and activities, such as poverty reduction efforts, should be encouraged to include and monitor ageing dimensions in their agendas and to advocate for inclusion of these issues in poverty reduction strategies. International development partners could conduct an "ageing impact analysis" of programmes and projects, similar to the analyses of gender or environmental impact that many of them already undertake.

B. Modalities of the bottom-up approach

8. The bottom-up approach is defined as an open-ended, participatory process that seeks to incorporate and link local and national activities to United Nations regional intergovernmental bodies and global processes of review and appraisal. A bottom-up participatory approach is expected to offer Governments several advantages, including: broadening the sources of information available to policy makers by complementing statistical and other data with qualitative information; the provision of policy-relevant information when statistics or other data do not exist and cannot be gathered on short notice; the establishment of priorities for policies and programmes that reflect peoples' interests; monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of policies and programmes and their reorientation, if needed; and

an opportunity for people, in particular those who are excluded or marginalized, to articulate their conditions and their needs.

9. The bottom-up participatory approach should be considered an essential element of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action. It includes several key components: awareness raising/advocacy; assessment of needs and setting of targets; gathering of information; "distillation" of local findings into policy-relevant formats; and adjustment of policies and programmes in accordance with the conclusions and recommendations of the review and appraisal. **The monitoring process should be seen as a series of parallel developments rather than sequenced steps, and must include a feedback mechanism so that policy can be adjusted as necessary.**

10. The review and appraisal process should start by raising awareness at national and local levels about the Second World Assembly on Ageing and the recommendations of the Madrid Plan of Action. In order for people to be able to participate in a review and appraisal activity, they must first be informed of the content of the Plan of Action. The ultimate goal of this initial stage is, therefore, to inform older persons, as "primary" stakeholders, of their rights, responsibilities and opportunities as defined in the Madrid Plan and to establish a notion of local ownership of its implementation and follow-up. Mobilization through provision of information, education and communication activities can help older persons to understand that they have a critical role in the bottom-up approach. **An advocacy campaign should lead to the assessment of local needs, setting targets and the formulation of appropriate programmes of action.**

11. Gathering relevant information is the core of the review and appraisal process. The essence of the participatory method is to listen to stakeholders and to give them a chance to state their views at different stages of the process. This allows a different type of information to emerge, information which may be more qualitative in nature, to complement quantitative monitoring. Given the heterogeneity of issues related to ageing and corresponding policy responses, entry points of information for evaluation of the Madrid Plan must be multitudinous rather than confined to a single method. Gathering of primary information will be undertaken at the local level (community, village, district, etc.). Information may be collected within regular focus groups, consisting of older persons, frontline service workers, service-user groups, family caregivers, older volunteers and all other valuable informants on how well policies have been realized. Periodic feedback to a national body is necessary so that the review and appraisal can occur at the national level. Watchdog groups, such as district coordinating committees, could be established to review the impact of different policies and programmes on older persons. A group monitoring process can be organized, taking advantage of existing community groups or organizations, and involving persons of all ages. Mini surveys based on representative samples could also bring interesting local findings to light.

12. Some examples of activities utilizing a bottom-up approach, including those with narrative component, can be found in China, where "Speak for Yourself" and "Let the People Speak" programmes have brought useful results, especially with regard to finding out how much relevant assistance individuals receive from government. The Government of India is initiating a model for a bottom-up approach to integrate and address the concerns of older persons from the lowest level of village administration through state governments up to the federal

government level. Local opinion-making groups will provide forums for discussing the concerns of older persons and actions that must be taken in order to ensure the assessment, review and implementation of policies on ageing, both vertically and horizontally. HelpAge International, an international non-governmental organization (NGO), is piloting an "Older citizens monitoring project" in five countries. Through the project, communities decide which aspects of policies affecting older persons they wish to monitor, develop indicators for monitoring and methods of data collection. They will present their findings as they relate to national policies, the implementation of the Madrid Plan and national poverty reduction strategies.

13. In addition to, and in connection with, the bottom-up participatory approach, countries may wish to monitor the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action with the help of indicators. The Madrid Plan makes several references to data collection and the development of indicators to gain better information on the quality of life of older people. As noted in the Madrid Plan, elaborating and using comprehensive and practical tools for evaluation, such as key indicators, is necessary to facilitate a timely policy response. Indicators could be used simultaneously, or in parallel, with the participatory assessment, or even be utilized as a practical tool within the participatory approach for gathering, analysing and distilling information.

14. The expert group meeting convened in Malta in November 2003 elaborated a set of indicators to assist the bottom-up approach to review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action. The suggested indicators are organized by objectives that pertain to priority issues within the three priority directions of the Plan. The proposed indicators, which were formulated on the basis of policy actions recommended in the Madrid Plan, are intended to assist Governments to assess progress in reaching the Plan's objectives. Efforts were also made to link the proposed indicators to those for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals. Two types of indicators are proposed: instrumental and outcome. The instrumental indicators aim at evaluating the availability of programmes and policies that have been adopted to address issues of population ageing and improve the well-being of older persons, while the outcome indicators attempt to identify positive or negative changes in the quality of life and socio-economic conditions of older persons.

15. Once relevant information is collected at the local level, it will have to be passed along through provincial to national authorities. It is important for Governments to clarify the process by which this will take place. Rules, legislation, traditions, networks, ethnic alliances, patronage, political allegiances and bureaucratic structures form a complex and fluctuating environment through which such information will be channelled. Using the bottom-up approach, Governments must be able to distil the findings of local consultations into policy-relevant formats that are meaningful at national and international levels. As the information obtained is passed from the local to the national and regional levels, efforts must be undertaken to identify relevant experience and draw lessons for policy. Part of the distillation process will be to prioritize critical issues from among the many valuable inputs that will be received from the local level and, later, from the national level.

16. It is important that the distillation of gathered information occur at all levels of the process. It should not necessarily be assigned to a particular body or confined to a particular stage of the review and appraisal process. Normally, verification of findings must be undertaken in situ, particularly since locally detected issues would

require local solutions. At the same time, the entire process needs to be carefully coordinated so as not to discount the heterogeneity of older population and the diversity of the information already gathered. To achieve this, partnerships involving all major stakeholders are required in order to collate all the information and feed it into the appropriate channels throughout the review and appraisal exercise. Information, once analysed and distilled, needs to be fed simultaneously back to the community as well as on to the national level.

17. The national level of the review and appraisal process is where the findings must be translated into recommendations for improving policy and programme design in order to promote better implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action in local and national contexts. The process of review and appraisal should be facilitated at the top level of government and supported by national legislation. The role of government is crucial for ensuring sustainability and continuity of the appraisal process, including through provision of financial assistance to the local level.

18. National coordinating bodies with well-established links to different governmental entities would be useful in facilitating and coordinating the process of implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action, including its review and appraisal. Such a body could include the lead agency charged with responsibility for mainstreaming ageing, as well as representatives of civil society, academia and the private sector, supported by observers from United Nations programmes and agencies as well as other international organizations. Older persons must be included at all levels and in all components of the review and appraisal, including the processes of gathering of information, its distillation and decision-making for policy development. Non-governmental organizations and academic institutions are important in both collecting and distilling information from the local to the national level. Within the format of the bottom-up participatory approach, the major task of the national coordinating body would be to support the establishment of priorities and promote ownership of the entire implementation process of the Madrid Plan at the grass-roots level. Such a national body, with advisory functions, could also be an autonomous institution, ensuring the independent and impartial monitoring of progress in implementation, as recommended in the Madrid Plan. For example, Austria has established a fully independent council of senior citizens with rights and responsibilities similar to those of a chamber of commerce, which has become a major contributor to discussions on national policy on ageing.

C. Consolidation of national findings of review and appraisal at the regional level

19. National monitoring efforts should be coordinated with and supported by regional and global review and appraisal exercises. Regional support for the process is critical, and the Commission for Social Development may wish to encourage the United Nations regional commissions to promote and facilitate the sharing and exchange of information and experiences about the review process. Three regional commissions have already organized conferences that enabled Governments to elaborate regional strategies to promote the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action.¹ Regional reviews of implementation should be based on information provided from the grassroots through national reviews and should address areas of common concern and shared interest. The regional commissions and their

intergovernmental bodies can promote networking and provide a collective voice to member countries, national committees and other stakeholders. Ideally, the commissions should assist countries throughout the process of information-gathering and exchange, including distillation and analysis, towards formulation of findings and priorities for future policy action at the regional level. The vast diversity of issues will determine regional specifics of the review and appraisal process.

20. At the regional level, several initiatives aimed at coordinating regional implementation efforts, including the review and appraisal process, are already under way in Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, the Arab region and Africa. Within the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) region, an inter-institutional group was created in March 2002, consisting of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), ECLAC and the Programme on Ageing of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The group has been involved in the preparation of the regional implementation strategy for the Madrid Plan of Action and could continue the collaboration, following the adoption of the strategy by the Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing held from 19 to 21 November 2003 in Santiago, by providing assistance to countries in the region in their implementation efforts. In the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region, cooperation between the ECE secretariat and the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, with the support of the Government of Austria, is being explored to coordinate the regional review and appraisal exercise. The Arab League has established a Committee for Older Persons to facilitate the regional convergence of policies on ageing through the promotion of joint programmes and the sharing of experiences. In many countries in Africa, where infrastructure and resources are insufficient or non-existent, there are major barriers to the review of the implementation of the Madrid Plan. The African Union, along with the HelpAge International, has been playing an important role in closing the gap and coordinating regional efforts to address issues of ageing. In October 2003, a regional workshop was organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania and HelpAge International, to explore the nature of the ageing-poverty relationship in East and Central Africa and to identify measures needed to incorporate an ageing-poverty focus in poverty policies and strategies and into the Millennium Development Goals action programmes.

D. Consolidation of national and regional findings of review and appraisal at the international level

21. International cooperation will be required to assist some developing countries and countries with economies in transition in their implementation efforts, including the review and appraisal exercise. Such cooperation might include financial and technical support for establishing information and data collection institutions; dissemination of best practices; and training of government officials, civil society activists, researchers and professionals involved in monitoring and assessment. United Nations funds and programmes and the specialized agencies should contribute their expertise through their regional and field offices to support the

review and appraisal process from the local to the regional levels. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is developing training materials to assist Member States in their capacity-building efforts for implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action, including its monitoring, review and appraisal phases. In addition, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the International Association of Gerontology, together with practitioners in the field of ageing, have developed a research agenda on ageing to support the implementation of the Madrid Plan. In 2003, through a series of regional expert workshops in Chile, Japan, South Africa and Spain, research priorities for regional implementation were identified.

22. At the international level, periodic review and appraisal should take place within the Commission for Social Development. The Commission has been requested to establish modalities as soon as possible and to reach an understanding of the format of the substantive outcome of its review and appraisal. These modalities should be established at national, regional and international levels.

23. The Commission for Social Development may wish to request Governments to:

(a) Include both ageing-specific policies and ageing-mainstreaming efforts in their national review and appraisal exercise;

(b) Identify a lead agency to coordinate the national mainstreaming process;

(c) Establish or strengthen a national coordinating body or mechanism, which would include the lead agency, to facilitate the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, including its review and appraisal;

(d) Adopt, within their specific national circumstances, the bottom-up participatory approach to review and appraisal, the key components of which are: awareness-raising; assessment of needs and setting of targets; gathering of information; the distillation of local findings into policy-relevant formats; and adjustment of policies and programmes.

24. The Commission for Social Development may wish to request the United Nations regional commissions to facilitate, including through their intergovernmental bodies, the review and appraisal at the regional level by:

(a) Promoting networking and the sharing of information and experiences;

(b) Assisting Governments in the gathering, distillation and analysis of information, as well as in the presentation of the findings of national reviews and appraisals;

(c) Developing a regional analysis and defining priorities for future policy action.

25. With regard to the format of its review and appraisal, the Commission may decide to hold a series of informal discussions and consultations, such as round tables, symposiums and workshops, bringing together all major stakeholders. Time would also be allotted for the presentation of national and regional findings of the bottom-up participatory process. The substantive outcome of the review and appraisal undertaken by the Commission would be

the identification of achievements and obstacles and the establishment of priorities for future international cooperation in the implementation of the Madrid Plan.

26. With regard to periodicity, the Commission may decide to undertake its review and appraisal every five years. It may wish to select a specific theme emanating from the Madrid Plan for each review and appraisal cycle. It would then invite Governments and regional commissions to adopt that theme as they initiate the bottom-up participatory process.

27. The Commission may decide to request the United Nations system to support national efforts for review and appraisal by providing technical assistance for capacity-building.

Notes

¹ The Economic Commission for Europe organized the Regional Ministerial Conference on Ageing in Berlin in September 2002; the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific organized the Asia-Pacific Seminar on Regional Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Shanghai, China, in September 2002, and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean organized the Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing in Santiago in November 2003.